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THE MAGIC LANTERN IN YELLOW MEDICINE COUNTY

by Eva Sloan Watson

Bob Bishop has passed on to us the charming reminiscences of Eva Sloan Watson, who had vivid memories of the visit of a magic lantern man to her farm home in Minnesota around the turn of the century. The following excerpt from Mrs. Watson's remarks appeared in an article of Bob's in the June 1980 issue of The Antique World.

"A good year was 1903. You see, I remember many things, as people in my generation saw the flowering of a new age..but especially do I remember the days of the magic lantern show.

"There was an old man--or so he seemed to me because I was but seven years of age--who followed the harvest each year. The hay would fill the barn, the crops were harvested, and yellow flyers describing his 'great' magic lantern show would appear in the mailboxes along the country roads...Then one day we would see his shaky old wagon bumping and swaying down our road..

"Mama wasn't particularly pleased, but we kids were the envy of all others, for the old magic lantern man was staying at our house!...Mama was sort of stiff with the old fellow. Even I could see his clothing was seedy and bagged at the knees and elbows. His coat was much too large and kind of hung to one side. His collar drooped almost as much as his walrus mustache...

"On the day of the first show at our school..to the magic lantern man's surprise (for he sensed Mama didn't care much for him) she volunteered to bring along her brand new, table model Busy Bee phonograph with its flower-decorated morning glory horn...The lanternist was so pleased; said it was the first time he'd ever had music of any kind for the program. He busied himself with last minute details such as checking kerosene in the lantern. Then he whipped out his dirty old blue handkerchief and wiped the lenses. From his coat pocket he produced a funny-looking set of square scissors and proceeded to make a big show of

trimming the wick. While he was so occupied, Mama pleasured our friends and neighbors with 'Pony Boy, Pony Boy, Won't You Be My Pony Boy?' Then we kids all jumped up and marched around as John Philip Sousa's band played 'The Stars and Stripes Forever'...

"The oil lamps were turned down. The old fellow picked up a water glass and sipped, 'Just to clear my throat.' The old folks chuckled, 'cause we had all seen him fill the glass from his silver flask. He struck a match, bent down to light the lantern. His face got all red and devilish looking in the flickering light. When he got the lantern going, he adjusted the wick until an even square of light appeared on Mama's good cotton sheet which he had borrowed for use as a screen. (He'd promised her nothing shown would stick on the sheet.) Everyone was ready for a good time.

"First there were lots of comic slides which showed just the opposite of what the real world was like. Then Carrie Nation was shown whacking up barrels of booze with her hatchet, and Billy Sunday appeared and 'lowed as how 'Young people are going to Hell in a basket!'..We held our breath when the old man took us on a narrow-gauge railway up Pike's Peak.

"Well, all too soon, it was over..The old traveling man took a little nip from his flask. It dripped from his mustache, and he wiped it off with his sleeve. We kids helped him carry his slides and lantern to the carriage. Never had our little country school in Yellow Medicine County experienced such an evening! Ah, times have changed so much, but it is fulfilling to look back on those simple, innocent, down-to-earth entertainments."

WRITING AND [illegible]NG YOUR OWN MAGIC LANTERN SHOW
by Leora Wood[illegible]

Friends or audiences who are being introduced for the first time to the wonders of the magic lantern are often sufficiently bedazzled by the pot pourri approach--a few of this kind of slides, a few of that kind, a nice smattering of motion slides, and a roaring finale with a chromatrope and a Good Night slide. That kind of show can be fun both to give and to watch. So can shows using the old "readings" that came with the slides. But my family and I have found much more personal enjoyment and greater audience response when we develop well-written shows organized around specific themes.

Over the years we have done a biography of Frederick the Great, a show on the use of lantern slides in 19th century

churches, one on the evolution of different types of slides, one on gothic romances, one illustrating a story that appeared in an 1871 Scribner's Magazine, in which lantern slides were used to scare off attacking Indians. We've done religious shows, a Christmas show, natural history shows.

One of our shows was triggered off by the Surgeon General's first report on Smoking and Health, published in January, 1964. We discovered our collection contained an amazing number of slides with people or animals smoking. There were Chinese with opium pipes and Indians with peace pipes. There were fat men with cigars and thin men with cigarettes. There were men selling sausages and smoking, and men ice-fishing and smoking. There were monkeys and dogs and frogs and squirrels and birds smoking. There were fire-breathing dragons. And of course we found ways to work in other slides--people coughing and/or dying, death riding a white horse, faces registering anger, disbelief and derision when the report first appeared, people "knocked off their pins" by the awful news. As the voice of a woman suffering the pangs of nicotine withdrawal admitted, "I'm an absolute witch these days," our choicest witch slide--the one with the eerie movable eyes--appeared on the screen. Finally, as a reformed smoker stared contentedly into the fire, congratulating himself on having won his battle, the scene dissolved into one of angels bearing trumpets and the laurel wreath of triumph. Corny, but fun.

What made these shows possible was our son Kent's inborn penchant for organization. He was in his early teenswhen we first started collecting magic lanterns and slides. Over a period of many years, he catalogued our ever-increasing collection by topics. As a result, we can tell you the whereabouts of every slide that has an umbrella in it, every church, every balloon ascension, every chicken, devil, hiker or windmill, and so on in over 100 categories.

Whenever we wanted to do a show, we spread a white sheet on the dining room table and pulled out every slide that related in some way to our theme. For our Christmas show, for example, we pulled not only Christmas scenes but snow scenes, Christmas trees, churches, angels, Santas, toys, children playing, costume balls and numerous other categories. With these easily visible against the white sheet, we began moving them around until a storyline developed in our minds. Then I wrote the script, we spend many happy hours selecting background music for each sequence of slides, and we recorded both the narration and the background music.

This technique gives opportunity for some choice sound effects. Our show on the Centennial Exposition describes the heavy rainstorm that drenched thousands of people on opening

day in 1876. On the day we were recording it, a great crashing thunder storm with torrential rain developed. We opened the terrace door, and as I read the narrative into one microphone, Kent recorded the storm on another.

For the Centennial show and our "History of the Magic Lantern," we used a combination of 35 mm slides of old engravings and 35 mm slides of magic lantern slide images. To the purist, this would not qualify as a true magic lantern show, but it is an effective method for certain types of shows.

For shows using only authenic magic lantern slides, we tried a variety of techniques. Since our slides are all sizes and shapes, my husband and son first attempted to project a show using four lanterns of different sizes at the same time. They looked like a pair of hyperactive ping-pong players. This was so distracting no one could concentrate on the show. Our next technique, though time consuming to create, proved far easier to handle during projection. We made individual adapters for the 50-some slides in the show so they could all be used in the same lantern without delay between slides.

Another key to writing and producing a successful lantern show is to use plenty of slides, with the narrative kept brief and punchy. Many of the old "readings" are tedious bases for shows because the audience is left staring itself cross-eyed at a single slide while the narrator drones on and on.

What should your themes be? That depends, in part, upon the content of your collection, in part upon your personal interests and in part upon seasonal, historic or family events that provide appropriate springboards. The possibilities are limitless, if you look at your collection with a fresh eye. The magic is there. It is up to you to find it.

THE MAGIC LANTERN AND THE TEMPERANCE MOVEMENT
by Bob Bishop

The good ladies of the Women's Christian Temperance Union carried on a campaign of many years' duration in their successful effort to make Prohibition the law of the land. The magic lantern was used to present Temperance lectures in schools, churches, public meetings and of course, on the Chautauqua circuit. Dire illustrations were projected, showing the horrible effects of the demon rum.

Diseased and bloated organs filled the screen. Stalwart sons were shown degenerating to drunken beasts. Young fathers lost jobs, home and family because they took that first deadly drink. Young and old alike were urged and cajoled to sign the Pledge.

Mr. Calder-Marshall, English writer, in an article for a London paper, repeated in an article entitled "Prepare to Shed Them Now," this early day record of a testimony:

"In 1880, at the age of five, my mother was so impressed at the sky-blue-pink liver of a drunkard enlarged 10 times life-size by a magic lantern that she signed the Pledge. She never forgot the experience, even when sipping sherry."

Some years ago an Eastman Lantern Slide box came my way. The 3¼x4 transparencies were separated by layers of similar sized paper, obviously cut from pamphlets extolling the virtues of Temperance. One such excerpt began: "Churches and schools flourish, the spiritual outlook is hopeful, and the saloon is practically banished."--Governor Hoch of Kansas, in his Thanksgiving Message.

The excerpt continued: "Atlanta, Georgia--For the first time in its fifteen years of existence, every cell of the police jail was empty. Not a prisoner was incarcerated, and the turnkeys and matrons were having a very dull afternoon. The police attribute this remarkable condition to the prohibition law, which went into effect the first day of the year."--Washington Times, Jan. 25, 1908.

The lantern served the "good ladies" well, but the old lanternist was a fair-weather friend. Often after projecting a Temperance lecture, he would have for his "dry" audience bottles of special "Paraffin Oil" to wet their whistles. Of course this was only done by unscrupulous magic lantern men but certainly not by--The Old Projectionist.

FROM TOYMAKER TO SLIDE COLLECTOR
Introducing Henry and Jane Schlosser

On a recent trip to the Black Angus multi-ship antique market in Pennsylvania, my husband and I sought out fellow M. L. Society members Henry and Jane Schlosser, who have a booth there. Both, we learned, are former public relations specialists whose careers have veered in several other interesting directions. Unable to find work in his own field when he came to this country from Germany at the time of World War II, Henry became both a maker and an importer of toys. As their interest in antique toys increased, the Schlossers found their personal collections put a considerable strain on the available storage space in their home (a situation not unfamiliar to a good many members of this society!). So, the Schlossers made the next logical transition and set up shop as dealers in antique toys. Among the choice items in hand at

present are several magic lanterns and a large zoetrope with numerous picture strips.

Meanwhile, their interest in lantern slides, especially early handpainted French ones, continues. In the January-February 1980 issue of Spinning Wheel, Henry revealed several significant clues to slide identification. Certain colors or designs of the paper bindings around the slides, such as orange, red, blue and blue with gold curlicues, he reports, identify them as German, while a marble or plaid pattern indicates a French manufacturer. Both the French and the Germans sometimes used green borders, while yellow was used by both the Germans and the Austrians.

Schlosser considers handpainted slides by far the most valuable artistically and says they are the "stars" of any collection. As popularity of the lantern increased demand, slides began to be produced in quantity by a number of painters sitting in a row. The first traced the outline from a master drawing onto the glass. The slide was then passed down the table, and each artist painted in a particular color. True mass production of lantern slides became possible toward the end of the 19th century when a collodium-gelatin transfer process was developed by which the colored pictures could be applied to the glass more rapidly and at much lower cost. Schlosser's article is copiously illustrated by pictures of several different kinds of lanterns and a variety of types of slides.

THE MAGIC LANTERN DEFINED
by Leora Wood Wells

Since "magic lantern" is a term used to describe many different types of projection devices (see M. L. Bulletin, Vol I, no. 3), we propose to include definitions from the literature now and then for comparison purposes. Most mid-nineteenth century books on "Natural Philosophy"--and there are great numbers of these by different authors--contain brief definitions supplemented by diagrams lifted from earlier works.

Comstock's Philosophy Revised (1864) says, "The magic lantern is a microscope on the same principle as the solar microscope, but instead of being used to magnify natural objects, it is commonly employed for amusement, by casting the images of small, transparent paintings done on glass, upon a screen."

Norton's Elements of Natural Philosophy (1870) also refers to the relationship of the magic lantern and the solar microscope. It says, "The magic lantern is an instrument by which

translucent objects are magnified and thrown upon a screen. The objects are usually painted on glass, but the instrument may also be used to magnify photographs on glass, or natural translucent objects such as the wings of insects pasted on glass...The solar microscope is essentially a magic lantern, illuminated by the sun."

Peck's book on Natural Philosophy (1860, 1871), popularly known as Peck's Ganot because it is adapted from Ganot's French textbook, Popular Physics, contains especially interesting illustrations. It defines the magic lantern as "an apparatus for forming upon a screen enlarged images of objects painted on glass...It is composed of a box, in which a lamp is placed before a reflector; the light is reflected upon a lens, and is converged so as to illuminate strongly a plate of glass upon which the picture is painted. Finally a combination of two lenses, acting as a single convex lens, is placed so that the plate shall be a little beyond the principal focus. At this distance the lenses produce a magnified and inverted image of the picture painted on the glass. The picture on the glass should be inverted in order that its image may appear erect."

A more detailed definition appears in Chambers's Encyclopaedia (W. & R. Chambers, London, 1864, Vol VI). It describes the lantern as "an optical instrument by means of which magnified images of small pictures are thrown upon a wall or screen. The instrument consists of a lantern containing a powerful Argand lamp; in the side of the lantern is inserted a horizontal tube, on a level with the flame, and the light is made to pass through the tube by reflection from a concave mirror placed on the opposite side of the lantern. The tube is furnished with two lenses, one at each end; the inner one is a hemispherical illuminating lens of short focus, to condense a strong light on the picture, which is inserted into the tube, between the lenses, through a transverse slit. The other end of the tube is fitted with a double convex lens, which receives the rays after passing through the picture and throws them upon the screen or wall. The pictures are formed with transparent varnish on glass slides, and must be inserted into the tube in an inverse position in order that the images may appear erect. If the screen on which the image is thrown be at too great a distance, the image will become indistinct from the lessened intensity of the light, and distorted by the increasing spherical and chromatic aberration, though this latter defect may be obviated by the use of a screen of the same curvature as the outside surface of the lens. This instrument is generally used as a toy, but is also occasionally employed to produce enlarged representations of astronomical diagrams, so

they may be well seen by an audience. Phantasmagoria, dissolving views, etc., are produced by a particular manipulation of the same instrument."

Although basically a good description of the structure and function of the magic lantern, this article is misleading in a number of ways. The same reference (Vol I) defines the lamp invented by Aimé Argand (died 1803) as one having the wick in the form of a ring which caused the flame to be "a hollow cylinder with a current of air ascending through the inside." No lantern in our collection, either toy or professional, has a wick of this type.

The article also says the lantern "is generally used as a toy," yet indicates it uses "a powerful Argand lamp." Most toy lanterns, of course, have ordinary, low-power kerosene lamps. The reference also implies that large-audience shows were limited to those projecting astronomical diagrams, when actually, magic lanterns were in widespread use for many types of educational lectures and entertaining shows during the mid-nineteenth century.

"Phantasmagoria and dissolving views," which the article mentions, required the use of a larger and more complex lantern than most of the true "toy" lanterns. Indeed, in Vol. III, this encyclopedia tells us that dissolving views are "pictures painted upon glass, and made to appear of great size and with great distinctness upon a wall by means of a magic lantern with strong lenses and an intense oxyhydrogen light, and then--by removal of the glass from the focus, and gradual increase of its distance--apparently dissolved into a haze, through which a second picture is made to appear by means of a second slide, at first with a feeble, and afterwards with a strong light. Subjects are chosen to which such an optical illusion is adapted, such as representations of the same object or landscape at different periods."

If these discrepancies in a single reference seem confusing, the explanation is simple. Chambers's Encyclopaedia, like most similar works, is made up of articles by many different authors, each with his own expertise, biases and sources of information and misinformation. This reference does not include the term "stereopticon" which was later applied to certain types of magic lanterns. In Vol. IV, it does, however, include an excellent explanation of the operating principles of the stereoscope as developed by Wheatstone (1838) and Brewster (1849). At the time this reference was written, Holmes had not yet developed the hand-held stereoscopic viewer which has occasionally caused him to be credited with inventing the stereoscope.

Science for All (Robert Brown, Cassell & Company Limited, London, Paris & New York, late 19th century) has an extensive, well-illustrated article by John Thomson on the magic lantern from its most primitive form to the complex binunals and sciopticons of the late nineteenth century. The binunal, Thomson says, "must be familiar to our readers. It has figured in many a school room, an angular mystery, manipulated by a maze of screws and milled heads, accompanied by a pair of enormous dropsical-looking bags placed under heavy pressure." The bags, which contained highly volatile oxyhydrogen gas, were decidedly unsafe. "Accidents," Thomson reports, "were not unfrequent, and some of them proved fatal."

The most ingenious lantern described by Thomson is one of his own invention which featured glass slides linked together in a continuous flexible strip. This strip passed over a leather-covered cube mounted above the lantern. This cube was rotated to allow each slide to descend vertically into the slide aperture for projection and then pass on down into the wooden case on which the lantern was mounted. This crude device can be recognized as a forerunner of the film strip used in early hand-cranked movie projectors and still in use in modified form today.

The few references on which this article is based--ones I happened to have available at our cottage in Maine--barely scratch the surface of the subject of magic lantern definitions. Lanterns were made in an almost infinite variety of sizes, shapes and types of construction. Collectors--whether beginners or old hands--will find their understanding and enjoyment enhanced by tracking down some of these old descriptions in books of the type cited. Exploring old bookshops to find the references is, of course, part of the fun.

KOCH'S CORNER: THE CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

- The next meeting of the Northwest members of the M. L. Society will be at our house on August 16 at 1 p.m. Alice and I will be happy to welcome any members from other areas who are in the vicinity at that time. Bob Bishop, Chairman of the Northwest group, has promised we will have a guest speaker, a trade and barter session, pot luck refreshments, a lot of tall tales, and any other amusements that strike our fancy.

- Did all of you see the double page spread of lantern slides in the June/July issue of American Heritage? It features the roller skating craze that hit the country just after the turn of the century. Each slide of skaters at an indoor rink in

Manhattan is accompanied by the verse or chorus of a skaters' song--"Roll around, around, around, to the music of the band..." If you look carefully, you'll note that all the illustrations are credited to "the Marnan Collection, Minneapolis, Minn." Translated, that means our member Nancy Bergh and her sister Margaret. You'll rember Nancy's article on song slides in a recent M. L. Bulletin.

- If you ever get to Bellingham, Washington, drop in at the Whatcom County Museum and get acquainted with M. L. Society member Galen Biery, whose interest is local history. Making his own 3¼x4" slides from old photographs, Galen has put together a fascinating lantern program.

- Don't forget to send information about lantern and slide manufacturers to Nancy Bergh, 1324 W. Minnehaha Parkway, Minneapolis, Minn.55419. She will compile a list which will be useful to all of us.

- About the national convention: It looks as if our long-anticipated national convention will be in Rochester, New York, sometime during the last two weeks of July 1981. We are grateful to our member Ed Lennert for taking on the responsibility for arrangements. We will keep you posted as dates and plans become more definite.

- Bibliography: Our member John Potter has agreed to compile information on publications containing magic lanternmaterial. Please send your lists directly to him at 903 Violet Meadow South, Tacoma, Washington 98444.

NOTES FROM HERE AND THERE: THE EDITOR'S SCRAPBOOK

- M. L. Film. A 1976, nine minute, 16 mm sound and color film on the magic lantern is available for sale or for rental use through Cecile Starr, 50 West 96th St., New York, New York, 10025. It features antique slides and projectors and animated footage from GeorgesMelies' classic 1903 motion picture in which the influence of the magic lantern was clearly evident. Antique music boxes provide the musical background. The film rents for $17.50 and sells for $170.

- Book. Members particularly interested in motion slides--the forerunner of animated films--may wish to have a look at Experimental Animation, preface by Robert Russett and Cecil Starr, Van Nostrand Reinhold, 7625 Empire Drive, Florence, KY, 41042, 224 pages, 280 halftone illustrations, $8.95 paper, $14.95 cloth. The book contains more than 50 interviews with and about pioneers in film animation.

• Article. Nancy Bergh has sent us a two page photo spread on the first hundred years of Eastman Kodak photography. The article appears in Functional Photography, March, 1980.

• Auction Resource. The Washington Post reports that Parke Bernet holdsperiodic auctions of antique toys. In December, a 19th century zoetrope with 19 strips sold for $500. For information about these auctions, contact Pamela Brown, PB Eighty-Four, 171 East 84th St., New York 10028. Illustrated descriptive auction catalogues are available for $5 postpaid, and potential buyers can bid from them.

• Book. Those of you who are interested in understanding the relationship between the magic lantern and other such forms of entertainment as panoramas, dioramas, Chinese shadows, the Eidophusikon, phantasmagoria and mechanical pictures will be fascinated by The Shows of London by Richard D. Altick (The Belknap Press of Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. 1978). This five-pound tome of more than 550 large, tightly-packed pages traces the development of all types of public exhibitions in London from 1600 to 1862. It includes museums and wax works, automata and zoos, fine art and freak shows, fairs and sightseers' attractions, cosmoramas and panopticons and other categories too numerous to detail.

Representing an astonishing level of scholarly research, the book manages to remain lively and entertaining reading. Its only fault is the scarcity of illustrations of the spectacular mechanical contrivances that were the backbone of entertainment during that period. Because the book is more a social history than a history of technical developments, the author has elected to use mostly scenes of people looking at various forms of entertainment rather than representations of the devices themselves. However, the illustrations that are included--more than 200 reproductions of old engravings--are excellent.

• Magic Lantern Tour. British lanternist Roger Orme plans to tour some parts of the U.S. in October-November 1980. If you are interested in having him come to your area, contact him at 21 Grange Avenue, Hanham, Bristol, England. One feature of his program will be the progression in animation techniques from 1815 to 1900. Orme charges a guaranteed fee plus two nights double accommodations. He also markets his own L.P. recording of sentimental Victorian music to accompany slide shows.

Temptation. One of the nicest things about our jobs (my husband and I are both involved in the creation of historical museums) is that it enables us to go on buying antiques even now when the crazy level of inflation has driven us out of the role of collectors. Having bought most of our lanterns in the 1960's at prices ranging from $2.50 to $10, we find the present prices too ridiculous to consider. But even we are subject to temptation, and we nearly succumbed twice on a recent antiquing weekend in Pennsylvania.

One item that tempted us was an ungainly looking Bausch & Lomb accordian-type projector. We wouldn't have looked twice at it except for its one special feature--a hollow water tank for projecting images of living organisms during scientific lectures. That was hard to resist, especially since our zoologist son shares our magic lantern interests.

The other temptation involved a large, undistinguished lantern and twelve mahogany framed slides from a Masonic Knights Templar set. A couple of these were in poor condition, and several were excessively dull--but what made the whole thing hard to resist was a superb gear-type motion slide of "Christ Ascending Into Heaven." We told ourselves we could easily retrieve our money by cleaning up the lantern and selling it off with the slides we didn't want. However, having already an extensive list of "Things to Do When We Have More Time," plus jobs that keep us on the go more hours than we wish they did, we knew what would happen: we would lay out close to $200 in order to get one slide we really wanted, and add to the pressure on our already overcrowded attic.

We did buy a quaint little kerosene-powered postcard projector, much smaller and more primitive than the gas or electric Mirroscope and Radiopticon projectors one usually sees, and reasonably priced. But in idle moments, we find ourselves wondering whether our "two temptations" will still be waiting to taunt us on our next trip to the same area.

CAN YOU TELL ME?--QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT MAGIC LANTERNS

Q: I'd like to see an article at some time about the various types of lanterns. Jack Boucher

A: As you see from the article in this issue on "The Magic Lantern Defined," there's almost no end to the types of lanterns. Lanterns ranged in size from about 7½" tall to towering triunals some 3' high. Body shapes were square, spherical, vertical or horizontal cylinders, elongated horizontal bodies with U-shaped tops, expandable with bellows mid-sections. We have lanterns nicknamed the Flour Sifter, the Spice Box, the Bug and the Boiler Works because of their shapes, and one called the Golden Calf because of the elegance

of its brassware. Some lanterns were embossed tin. Many of the small ones were made of a dark, greenish-black metal called Russian iron. Others were painted black, red, blue, or multicolors. High quality lecturers' lanterns were usually triumphs of mahogany and brass with French lenses. One of ours has lenses 9" in diameter of exceptionally high quality glass.

Illuminants used in the lanterns ranged from candle power, whale oil, kerosene and camphor oil to limelight (oxyhydrogen gas) and eventually electricity. The slides ranged from those with pictures handpainted on the glass or applied by a sort of decal process to photographic images. They were rectangular, square, or circular with anywhere from one to eight images per slide. Sizes ranged from less than an inch high and less than 4" wide to several inches high and more than a foot long. Most late 19th and early 20th century photographic slides measured 3¼x4". The glasses were bound in colorful or marbleized paper tapes or mounted in cardboard, metal or mahogany frames. There were still slides and motion slides operated by levers, gears, rachets, cranks and slipping panels.

During the 18th and 19th centuries, lanterns were made in almost all European countries and in the United States. The majority of the small lanterns for home entertainment were made in Nuremburg, Germany. Many lanterns were given away as premiums to people who sold subscriptions to magazines such as The Youth's Companion. Advertisements in magazines and Sears and other catalogues urged young men to purchase lanterns and develop profitable businesses giving shows.

Q: Can you suggest any source materials that describe late 19th century lantern slide shows? Not the mechanics or the manufacture of the slides themselves, but the setting, audience, language of the shows and lectures. I'm interested in creating a 19th century ambience as realistically as possible. Was there a journal devoted to professional lantern slide lecturers which is available in reprint? Should I contact the George Eastman House or Library of Congress? Larry Rakow

A: Mrs. Watson's reminiscences, above, capture the ambience of one type of lantern show of that era. There were many types of shows in the late 19th century, so the ambience you create depends upon the type of equipment and slides you have and your personal preferences. Shows in rural areas of the Wild West tended to be rowdy affairs in which the lanternist was in some danger of being booed, pelted with vegetables and eggs or run out of town on a rail if his program was dull or

he inserted too many slides wrong way up. Showmen in these areas were often itinerant peddlers or patent medicine men by day and lanternists by night, and their shows were usually geared to entertainment rather than education.

At the same period, professional lanternists toured the cities giving formal lectures of high literary and visual quality on historical, religious, artistic and educational topics, especially of the travelogue type. Such shows were social and cultural events; people dressed for them with as much care as if they were attending the opera or the theater. This was also the heyday of three other types of public shows--popular scientific lectures often affiliated with universities, summer chautauquas or lyceums, social-message shows on such subjects as the evils of drink or life in the slums, and purely entertaining shows featuring dissolving views, phantasmagoria and spectacular sound effects requiring sophisticated equipment.

There were several journals devoted to magic lanterns, both British and American. The Photography Division of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. has an extensive library of these journals which its charter requires them to make available to researchers. A mail inquiry there or to the Library of Congress would yield very little; you'll have to dig out the information in person. You should clear your anticipated work dates in advance to be sure the materials are accessible when you need them. Have you tried the rare book collection or other departments of your library at Western Reserve University?

Q: What can be used to replace the pulley line on a crank-operated, gear-type motion slide? Larry Rakow

A: This is a tough one. Ordinary cotton string or button thread will work for a while but does not provide the desirable smoothness of operation. Large rubber bands also work on small slides of this type but would not be large enough for big slides. Perhaps your digging in the old journals will help you identify what was used originally and give you ideas about substitutes you can devise. If so, please share your success story with other members through this bulletin.

Q: I have just acquired an Edison Home Kinetoscope, made, I believe, between 1912 and 1913. It is arc illuminated and is both a magic lantern, utilizing a special ten picture slide, and a motion picture projector for films created by the Edison studios. What can you tell me about this device, and has anyone perfected a technique for duplicating the films? Louis F. Lindauer

A: Edison began making and projecting brief film strips in 1889, and applied for a patent on the Kinetoscope as a viewing apparatus in 1891. This was the most advanced cinematographic viewing apparatus yet developed, and it roused widespread interest, but being a peepshow type mechanism, it had the disadvantage that it required individual viewing. Edison decided to develop a projection apparatus which would enable groups of people to see the film at the same time. However, the Lumière brothers, working along the same lines, succeeded earlier than did Edison.

The decade of the '90's marked enormous advances in motion picture projection. By 1902, the Sears, Roebuck catalogue advertised the improved 1901 model of the Edison Projection Kinetoscope as "the most perfect moving picture machine ever made." It projected both films and slides and came in two models, one operated by electric arc lamp and the other by calcium burner. Both models sold for $105.

By 1912, Edison had developed a small motion picture projector for home use. The Thomas A. Edison Album, by Lawrence A. Frost, Superior Publishing Co., Seattle, 1969, p. 112 has a picture taken July 19, 1912, which shows Edison examining this projector, which continued to be called a kinetoscope. I do not know the answer to your question about duplication of films. Perhaps the Archivist of the Edison National Historic Site in West Orange, New Jersey, can give you additional information.

BUY/SELL/TRADE

- I am looking for lantern slides on the Armenian massacres of 1896 and 1915. If anyone has any, please let me know. Carl Mahakian, Col. USMCR Ret., P.O. Box 489, Saugus, California,

- For sale, Bausch & Lomb Combined Baloptican, serial #43301, for slides or opaque pictures. Projects forward or on ceiling. No slide carrier. Also Bausch & Lomb opaque projector serial #60502. Needs to be rewired. Also the following wood-framed slides: adoration scene, Magdaline, fire scene, group of marching soldiers, dissolving view of Washington's Dream, colored boy with cauliflower (has been cut for hanging). Prefer to trade for children's & other magic lantern slides. Robert W. Scherer, Apt. 5, 1649 Dewey Street, Hollywood, Florida 33020.

- Want to buy, "Coming Attraction" slides used in movie theaters. Robert E. Rosen, 23300 Greenfield Road, Oak Park, Michigan 48237.

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

New member: Betty Anderson
172 Motor Street
Clintonville, Wisc. 54929

Home phone: (715) 823-6715
Business: (715) 823-2503

Interests: lanterns, literature, electric & carbon arc. Gives shows. Will sell or trade.

Address change: Richard Balzer
18 Fiske Place
Brooklyn, NY 11215

Address correction: Galen Biery
1023 13th Street
Bellingham, Washington 78255

Please make additions and corrections to your list.

New member: Mrs. Barbara Cauthorn
115½ Kearney Ave.
Santa Fe, NM 87501

Home phone: (505) 983-5138